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OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

POLICY PLANNING AND COORDINATING STAFF

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: January 8, 1980

Place: Diaoyutai Guest House,
Beijing

SUBJECT: Presentation by Ambassador Seignious on US Arms Control Policy

PARTICIPANTS: PRC - Zhang Wenjin, Vice Foreign Minister
Lin Ching, Director, Department of Legal
and UN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Yang Hushan, Chief, UN Political and Security
Affairs Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Luo Zenshi, Ministry of National Defense
Yang Minnian, Ministry of National Defense

US - Ambassador George Seignious
Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke
Vice Admiral Thor Hansen, Director, Joint
Staff of the JCS
John M. Joyce, Policy Planning Staff, ACDA
Charles Sylvester, Embassy Beijing

Following brief introductory pleasantries, Ambassador Seignious said that if the Vice Minister had no objection he would open substantive discussion by presenting his views on US arms control policy. The Vice Minister asked him to proceed.

Ambassador Seignious began by saying that it is important that we view this initial US-Chinese session on arms control realistically. Both sides in this discussion would be seeking avenues to serve their national interests. This initial attempt to find ways to meet mutual national interests is a first step on a Long March of another kind, with much work yet before us.

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-2-

General Seignious said that he planned to start this exchange of views with a presentation on three separate aspects of the arms control question. First, he would like to explain US philosophy; secondly, suggest ways that the US and the PRC could work together bilaterally; and finally, propose how best the two sides could serve their mutual interest in arms control on a multilateral basis.

The Vice Minister in response welcomed this first contact with the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. He said the PRC has no exact counterpart to ACDA, but hoped to develop one. He hoped we would be able to maintain the contact begun in this initial exchange not only in Washington and Beijing but also at the CD in February.

General Seignious noted that by joining the CD in February the PRC would be taking over the chairmanship in March.

The Vice Minister responded, with a smile, that the PRC was aware that it would acquire this responsibility.

The Vice Minister continued that he and the other members of his group were of course pleased to meet with Ambassador Seignious, but intended to listen more than speak. ACDA, with its long involvement in arms control, had by far the greater expertise.

The Vice Minister added that while the PRC intends to maintain continuity in its principled stand on arms control, it intends also to adjust that stand, and its handling of arms control issues, to accord with changing conditions in the world. In this process the PRC would be trying to learn the views of other states on these issues, especially those of the United States.

Ambassador Seignious thanked the Vice Minister for the openness and generosity of his welcome. He said that it was now clear to him why George Marshall and Chou Enlai wanted the Vice Minister present during their early meetings.

The Vice Minister noted that he had been instrumental in the two becoming good friends.

Ambassador Seignious began his presentation by noting that arms control, as advocated by many people, including private interest groups in the United States, was based on an idealistic approach to relations between states. He said that he strongly disagreed with that approach. Arms control should be pursued only if it meets national security needs. If it fails this test it should not be national policy. Each arms control agreement should meet the following criteria: First, does it increase our knowledge about the

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-3-

capabilities of enemy forces? Second, does it improve our information on the size of his forces? Third, does it improve our security in other ways? As an example, he continued, if we were to ratify SALT we would know more about the structure of Soviet forces and understand better their nuclear potential. We could acquire this information with our own national technical means and would not be relying on trust.

Ambassador Seignious cited as a primary objective in arms control qualitative restraints on weapons systems, and gave as an example the ABM Treaty. In explaining the changes the ABM Treaty has brought about in the international strategic situation, he pointed out that the PRC itself has benefitted, since the Soviet Union has been prevented from developing a defense which would perhaps have negated the threat of a Chinese retaliatory strike. As a second example, he explained that fractionation limits in SALT II would rule out a potential increase of 6,000 warheads on the SS-18s alone.

Ambassador Seignious added one further consideration. He said he had agreed to return to government service, after some years in retirement, because of his strong belief that the major nations of the world must soon learn to regulate nuclear weapons. The window in time open to them, he continued, is a narrow one which becomes narrower still every day. The pace of technological change is moving faster than our efforts to regulate it, and we face the danger that it may soon run out of control.

Ambassador Seignious said that for 32 years he had been an officer in the US military contributing to the security of the United States. This service had impressed on him the need for arms control to be placed fully in the context of national security. He introduced at this point Vice Admiral Hansen to explain the view of the military on our national arms control policy.

Vice Admiral Hansen said that as the chief staff officer of the JCS he could personally attest to the thoroughness with which the JCS studies US arms control proposals to insure that they meet national security needs. He explained that SALT II was, in the view of the JCS, in the national security interest. The treaty is verifiable, and meets the other criteria which Ambassador Seignious had explained in the course of this meeting. Admiral Hansen said it is important for the PRC to understand that the JCS does support SALT, for that has often been obscured in US press reports.

Ambassador Seignious then turned to bilateral questions, expressing the hope that substantive discussions would develop soon in a search for ways in which bilateral agreements could meet our common interests. He had already proposed to a PRC representative

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-4-

that a rapid communications link be established between the PRC and the US for use by the national leaders. He emphasized the need for such rapid and reliable communications during times of crises, such as nuclear accidents or incidents or events involving the Soviet Union.

Ambassador Seignious said that in beginning work together on arms control the two sides must develop the ability to discern what is in each other's interest. As long as we can serve our mutual interest, we can move the dialogue forward. Perhaps the most fruitful area for our cooperation on arms control at this stage is in the multilateral area. He said that, taking into account the fact that the PRC will chair the CD in March, he had instructed our Ambassador to the CD to be as helpful as he could to the Chinese Ambassador.

General Seignious briefly reviewed at this point several of the issues which would be on the agenda at the CD beginning in February. He mentioned specifically chemical weapons and radiological weapons.

Ambassador Seignious then turned to the Chinese position that the superpowers must limit their arms before the smaller powers can begin. He said this approach is fundamentally correct, but not sufficient. The United States is willing to reduce, as we demonstrated in our March 1977 proposal to the Soviet Union, but the Soviets have refused. All powers, small and large, must join in pressuring the Soviets to reduce.

Ambassador Seignious said that Chinese participation in the CD will make a profound impression on the world opinion. The PRC is known as a self-reliant nation, and its opinions will be highly respected. For example, Chinese support for nuclear free zones is well-known. There are other ways in which the PRC could reaffirm its support for the principle of nuclear free areas. For example, it could accede to the Outer Space Treaty and the Seabeds Treaty, both which have as their primary aim barring the stationing of nuclear weapons in vast areas of man's environment.

Ambassador Seignious concluded by saying that he was proud to have been in on the beginning of the US-Chinese dialogue on arms control, and was convinced that Chinese participation would make the world a more secure and safer place.

The Vice Minister thanks Ambassador Seignious for his systematic introduction to US thinking on arms control. It will help the PRC better to understand basic arms control concepts.

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- 5 -

The Vice Minister said he did not have much to add to the Ambassador's statement. Chinese positions are well known. These positions are principled, though not yet formulated in some specific areas of disarmament. He could endorse, however, one point made by Ambassador Seignious, and that is that all arms control proposals must be examined in the light of national security interests.

The Vice Minister continued that strengthening of a state's arms capability is not incompatible with arms control. If properly used, arms control can add to defense capability. The development of armaments of countries varies; therefore views on arms control vary as well.

The Vice Minister said that the US must understand that it was an objective fact that in the present world the two superpowers have the largest arsenals -- larger than the arsenals of all the other nations together. The primary danger to the world thus stems from these two superpowers. In today's world, however, it is the Soviet Union which is expansionist and the greater threat to world peace. Though the US has a large arsenal it is difficult for it alone to thwart the Soviet Union. The PRC and the US must therefore work together. Because of this the PRC does not take a negative view of the recent US defense budget increases, nor does it take a negative view of US military assistance to other nations.

The Vice Minister said he of course had known that the US has a positive view of SALT II. Ambassador Seignious' explanation had helped him understand why this is the case.

The Vice Minister thanked Ambassador Seignious for his instructions to the US Ambassador to the CD to cooperate closely with the Chinese Ambassador. The PRC will be a newcomer to the conference and will be depending on their American colleagues for assistance.

On the question of bilateral efforts, the Vice Minister said he agreed we need to deepen relations in order to discern common interests in arms control. The two sides would be keeping in contact in order to do this. He thanked Ambassador Seignious for his advice on multilateral questions. The PRC has not made a deep study on many of these issues, since its primary attention has been usually devoted to other efforts. Now, however, it is time for the PRC to turn to active considerations of arms control.

The Vice Minister again thanked Ambassador Seignious for this chance to meet, and expressed the hope that the United States and China would keep in contact on these matters through many channels.

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-6-

Ambassador Seignious responded that we would be happy to do so, and that upon request we would send a team to Beijing to discuss the history of arms control and to provide briefs and literature on these subjects. Or, if the PRC wished, it could send a delegation to Washington. We can, he continued, establish our own "hot line" on arms control matters.

The Vice Minister thanked Ambassador Seignious for the offer. He said the PRC will consider sending or receiving a team, and suggested that for that eventuality the sides should exchange agenda items.

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